

1996  
General Elections

# People's Manifesto



*An Alternative Programme For Sustainable Development,  
Democratic and Decentralised Polity and the Right to Livelihood*

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## 1996 General Elections

# PEOPLE'S MANIFESTO

*An alternative programme for sustainable development, democratic and decentralised policy and the right to livelihood.*

### INTRODUCTION

The germinating ideas for this People's Manifesto were sown at the Peoples' Summit on Social Development in Tamilnadu held in March '95, Parallel Summit to the World Summit on Social Development. Numerous thematic presentations outlined the political issues and socio-economic concerns facing the State. The Tamilnadu Peoples' Forum for Social Development was born out of this effort. The announcement of elections to Panchayats crystallised some of this thinking into two important declarations viz. "Tamilnadu NGO Declaration on Panchayati Raj and Decentralised Democracy" and a Peoples Charter for Panchayati Election in Tamilnadu adopted at the State-level Convention on Panchayati Raj held in November '95.

General elections were due and it was strongly felt by many social action groups and activists that there was the need to draft an alternative programme for sustainable development, democratic and decentralised polity and the right to livelihood. The Election manifestos of all major political parties have been thoroughly studied. This manifesto is being released as a representation of the collective voices from the grassroots.

It is a Social Charter that will be placed by peoples' organisations before candidates and political parties demanding their acceptance. Simultaneously, whichever party or combination of parties that comes to power will need to prepare and present a new Budget for 1996-97. The TNPFS has established a Budgetary Analysis and Policy Priority cell, which will be closely monitoring the Government of Tamilnadu Budget. This Peoples' Manifesto will be the peoples' programme - a framework to evaluate the performance of whichever government that comes to power in Tamilnadu.

## **1. PREAMBLE**

The last decade in Tamilnadu has witnessed the rise of numerous voices from below-people's movements and campaigns for basic needs, for the right to land, food, living wages, housing, work, education and healthcare; protests against shrimp farms and deep sea fishing vessels; against destruction of forests, commercial exploitation of natural resources and common village resources, environment pollution and alienation of lands. The Dalit movement and the women's movement have forcefully fought oppression and have put forward a new politics of empowerment. In various places activists and grass roots organisation have opposed corruption, the new economic policies, WTO and the imposition of social clauses as part of the Multilateral Trade Agreement. Increasingly unorganised labour is getting organised and the campaign for eradication of child labour has forced society and government to work for the abolition of child labour and the recognition of the rights of children. The Peoples Manifesto is an articulation of these voices from below. It is addressed to the people and the political parties. It is an alternate programme for sustainable development, democratic, decentralised polity and the right to livelihood for all Tamil people. It is also a critique of the corrupt and criminalised politics of the dominant political parties, the ruling party and the elite. This is the Social Charter for which we will mobilise, irrespective of which government comes to power.

## **2. STATE OF THE ECONOMY, AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL SECTOR**

Tamilnadu is a densely populated and highly urbanised State with a relatively developed infrastructure. While a predominant section of the workforce continues to depend on agriculture and related activities, it appears that this sector is stagnating. Poverty levels, both in the urban and rural areas, are higher than the corresponding all-India levels. Per capita income levels in Tamilnadu were fairly close to those prevailing in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (which along with Bihar form the “Bimaru” belt, the heartland of backward India).

The growth of the State’s primary sector (agriculture and allied activities account for the most substantial part) has been decelerating. Between 1983-84 and 1987-88, this sector, which accounts for about one-fourth the NSDP, grew at the rate of 6.77 percent; however, between 1988-89 and 1992-93 it fell to 5.71 percent. In roughly the same period (1981-1991), as revealed by Census data, the share of the workforce depending on the primary sector remained virtually unchanged - at about 62 percent. This means a substantial part of the population has been adversely affected by the deceleration in the primary sector. The distress in rural Tamilnadu can be gauged by the fact that average employment in a year was 194 days in 1964-65 and in the early - 1980s it was only 188 days. Over the 20-year period, rural employment levels were below the average national levels. The per capita production of foodgrains in the State fell from 170 kg in the early-1970’s to 138 kg two decades later. That this has happened despite favourable advances in controlling fertility rates is a matter of concern.

Tamilnadu traditionally has a high percentage of agricultural labour in its workforce; it is more than 35 percent now. Nearly 11 percent of the country’s agricultural labour is in the State. Cultivators and agricultural labour account for nearly 60 percent of the workforce. There are also gross inequalities in land distribution in the State. While the bottom 50 percent of rural households own 1.5 percent of the land, the top 5 percent own about 40 percent.

The secondary sector grew at a faster pace between 1988-89 and 1992-93 from 2.4 to 7.6 percent per annum.

However, the benefit of the sharp increase in output reached only 16 percent of the workforce.

The growth of the tertiary sector also decelerated during this period, marked by a particularly strong decline in a range of services-transport, trade, hotels, railways, banking and insurance. The growth rate of this sector, sustaining 22 percent of the workforce - fell from 7.64 percent to 5.96 percent per annum.

The income-generating capacity of the work-force also deteriorated over the years. This is particularly so in the agricultural sector where Tamilnadu was ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in terms of income generation per worker in the 90's. In industry the State ranks 10<sup>th</sup> and in services sixth.

The unemployment rate is higher than the national average. The number of job seekers on the live registers of the employment exchanges increased from 1.3 million in 1980 to 3.7 million in 1993. The State's share of those thus registered in India overall increased from 7 percent to more than 10 percent during this period.

The balance sheet for the State's economic performance in the long term indicates several disquieting features. While the performance of the primary sector, particularly agriculture, has slipped, that of the secondary sector, notably industry, has remained virtually stagnant. Even the growth in the tertiary sector has been caused primarily by the growth of public administration and other services. Widespread poverty of high levels, particularly in the urban areas, continues to remain a major issue.

## **Environment**

The most significant of the State's natural endowments is the 1,000-km-long coastline, accounting for 17 percent of the country's total. The Coastal Zone Regulations of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, intended to protect coastal areas, are often treated with scant regard. A case in point is the Asian Development Bank-funded East Coast Road. Much of the coastal habitats have been degraded. Though protected as a reserve forest, vast areas of the 225 sq km of mangroves, teeming with life, have been abused to the point of extinction, except Pichavaram in South Arcot district.

Also extensively damaged are the 23 coral islands between Mandapam and Tuticorin, covering 683 hectares in the 1980s. Over 15,000 tonnes of coral was removed, damaging the reefs extensively. Also disappearing is sea grass, a table delicacy, which commands a premium price abroad, caused mainly by the dumping of wastes. Pearl banks and chank beds, the priced treasures off Tuticorin in the Gulf of Mannar, are fast depleting

owing to industrial pollution and the silt and mud carried by the Tamaraparani river (mainly owing to deforestation).

Ever since the Central Government's Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), spurred by the export-oriented New Economic Policy, identified shrimp farming as a thrust area, aqua-farming has proliferated. With the trebling of prices since 1991, there has been a rush into aquaculture, laying waste mangrove forests and lagoons in South Arcot and Nagai Quaid-e-Milleth districts. NEERI, which evaluated the State's Aquaculture status, has come out with startling revelations on the damage done to agriculture and the coastal ecosystem. Of the over 12,000 industrial units in the State, more than 5,000 are on the coast and some 2,500 not far away; the major concentration of 1,500 is in Madras. These units discharge into the sea such heavy metals as cadmium, copper, lead, mercury, nickel and zinc. No wonder the mortality of fish and aquatic organisms is endemic in many parts of the coast.

Rapid industrialisation is also taking place along the Cauvery's course. Industries are concentrated near the Mettur and Bhavani dams and along the Noyyal, Bhavani and the Amaravati rivers. These industries include textiles, chemicals, distilleries, paper and sugar. Discharged from these units are alkalis, chromium, barium, arsenic and cyanide as sludges and solid waste. Distilleries throw out minerals, colour, acids and Sulphate. High quantities of chloride (2,200-7,500 mg/l) are reported in the distillery effluents. Textiles let out alkali, chlorine, peroxide, detergents, dyes, chromium and phenol, all highly toxic and some even carcinogenic.

The beautiful and clean hills of the Western Ghats have been facing severe destruction. Rampant deforestation and proliferation of hotels and tourist homes without proper effluent treatment facilities have degraded most of the hill towns.

Other areas of concern are the over 8,000 tonnes of fertilizer and 500,000 litres of liquid pesticides used in the State, continued use of DDT despite its ban in other States and increased radioactive waste from the Madras Atomic Power Station at Kalpakkam; the radioactive waste discharge levels went up significantly from 1985 to 1988.

## Agriculture

Tamilnadu has been falling behind steadily in agriculture, especially since the mid 1980s, with the crop area declining and the production plateauing. Close to two-thirds of the cultivated area depends on this rainfall. With 372 persons per sq km, the density is much higher than the national average. According to the National Sample Survey, land distribution is most skewed in Tamilnadu. Twenty percent of the rural households were landless in the early 1980s, much higher than the all-India figure of 11 percent. Another 48 percent had submarginal holdings of less than one acre, again much higher than the country's average of 36 percent. The conditions have worsened in the 1970s and the 1980s. The per capita availability of land is one of the lowest in Tamilnadu.

The cultivated area has also declined. While foodgrains production went up from 59 lakh tonnes in the early 1980s to 77 lakh tonnes in the early 1990s, the gross cropped area fell by 100,000 hectares and the gross irrigated area by 400,000 ha during the same period. Its irrigation coverage in the late 1970s was 42 percent compared to the all-India average of 25 percent. With over a million pumpsets energised by the late 1970s, Tamilnadu was ranked Number one. This was supported by big strides in mechanisation - the number of tractors in the State went up from 327 in the 1950s to over 1700 in the 1980s. Fertilizer consumption also rose from 2 kg to over 67 kg in the same period availability of credit, the seed fertilizer- water-mechanisation combine. Agriculture production has remained stagnant since the late 1980s.

Primarily because the technology transfer was not backed by any land reform or institutional change, cornering of land and much of the subsidies for power, fertilizer etc., by a few led to over exploitation of crucial resources. Water is at the root of Tamilnadu's present agricultural problem. There is a significant shift from public (tanks and canals) to private (well) irrigation. From 9 lakhs in 1960, the number of wells rose to 18 lakhs in 1994. While the percentage of the area irrigated by wells increased from 24 lakh ha to 46 lakh ha, the share of ground-water has increased from 3 percent in 1960 to 70 percent in 1990. Over two-thirds of the total irrigation potential of the State has already been tapped. Over-exploitation of ground water has pushed water tables to below 200 metres (600 ft). 97 of the State's 384 blocks are considered "dark", where over 90 percent of the groundwater potential has been exploited.

Being in the rain-shadow region, many parts of the State do not get the more dependable South West Monsoon. The average rainfall has decreased by 40 percent - from 1,124 mm in the 1960s to 669 mm in the 1980s. Also the Cauvery and the Periyar river systems, which feed parts of Tamilnadu, depend on rainfall in the catchment areas of Karnataka and Kerala. Regulating the use of groundwater is very urgent. However it is difficult to enforce this legally. The approach should be a combination of legislation, educating the users, and a system of disincentives (such as a high price for electricity and diesel oil and no subsidy for equipment and digging wells). This should be area-specific, that is over, medium and low-exploited zones. But, says Vaidyanathan, “more important is the change in the management of the systems. There should be greater accountability in the way water distribution is decided”. Public expenditure on agriculture and rural development (ARD) has declined significantly.

## **Social Sector**

The Tamilnadu Government has been trumpeting its “impressive performance” in the social sector citing a few indicators: 64 percent literacy, compared to 52 percent for the country; birth rate of 19 per 1,000 population (28); death rate of 6.8 per 1,000 (9.8); life expectancy at birth of 61 years (59); and infant mortality rate of 73 per 1,000. A large section of the population has been left out. According to the National Sample Survey’s consumer expenditure data, the poorest decile accounts for less than four percent of the total consumer expenditure in the State, while the richest decile spends close to 30 percent. In urban Tamilnadu, the poorest deciles’s per capita consumer expenditure is less than half the amount that corresponds to the poverty line, while the richest decile’s is about nine times the average of the poorest decile. Over 60 percent of the population doest not get the recommended minimal nutritional norm of 2,400 kilocalories per capita per day.

That Tamilnadu’s impressive demographic transition has occurred in the absence of any significant social and economic progress is further reflected in a low per capita income (Rs.4,428, with only six States below it), a high percentage of population below the poverty line (45 percent, compared to 39 percent) and its 12th rank (among 17 States) in the Human Development Index (computed on the now-popular United Nations Development Programme’s HDI). The ranking indicates low levels of, and poor accessibility to, education, health care, housing and nutrition.

Tamilnadu population growth is one of the lowest. While the State has 75 doctors per lakh population, against the national average of 43, the distribution of hospitals is unfavourable to the rural areas (25 percent of the total hospitals compared to 42 percent all-India). Though primary health centres (PHCs) extend preventive and curative healthcare to the rural areas the coverage is still low-one PHC for every 50,000 people. There is also a high incidence of female infanticide. There are disparities in the infant mortality rate as well. It is 40 per 1,000 live births in the urban areas and 67 in the rural areas: even in Madras, the incidence is 70 percent higher among the slum population.

While child labour in the State is put at 5 percent of the worker population, in areas like Sivakasi it is 41 percent (79 percent of them are girls). With a large number of child workers in certain pockets and industries like beedi-rolling in Tirunelveli and North-Arcot, and match and fireworks in Sivakasi, the State has the dubious distinction of having the largest concentration of child workers in Asia.

In the primary, or agriculture sector the proportion of cultivators has declined over the last two decades by about 20 percentage points; they have become labourers. Similarly, in the secondary sector the proportion of workers in household manufacturing has fallen, indicating a change in status, from that of the self-employed to wage worker. This has resulted in high "casualisation" of the labour force; one-third of the men and two-third of the women are casual workers in the urban areas. The proportion is higher in the rural areas. The unemployment rate is also one of the highest. According to the Planning Commission's Experts Committee on poverty, 45 percent of Tamilnadu's population is below the poverty line. A number of poverty alleviation programmes have been introduced and steadily enlarged, but many suffer from fund leakages, poor focussing of target groups, insufficient allocation and so on.

### **3. IMPACT OF NEW ECONOMIC POLICIES AND GATT-WTO**

The biggest threat to the sovereignty of India and the various states is the IMF World Bank and the unequal trade terms of GATT-WHO detailed in the New Economic Policies. The Government of Tamilnadu over the last four years has implemented these policies with great enthusiasm. The single most important achievement of liberalisation of our economy has been the rise of endemic levels of corruption. Frauds, scams, Hawala transactions etc been the result of these New economic policies all at the cost of public funds and common peoples' resources.

Today, international finance capital is the global dictator determining the economic policies of several independent states. The gross domestic product of Tamilnadu is said to be much less than the gross income of E.I Du Pont, one of the 10 most dangerous corporations in the U.S. and a company given permission to set up a plant near Madras. India's gross domestic product is less than the gross incomes of the three largest corporations in the U.S.A. It is these global corporations who use IMF, World Bank and WTO to promote its capital, technology and market interests. These economic policies have resulted in a red-carpet welcome for TNC's, de-regulation of export-import trade, privatisation and dismantling of the Public sector, all round inflation, retrenchment of workers, drastic cut in subsidies for farmers and food security, increasing abrogation by the State of its welfare services and development programmes for the downtrodden, and permission for foreign banks and insurance companies to establish with special facilities etc. Further, budgetary allocation for the social sector like education, health care, drinking water, housing, welfare of SC & ST, women and child development etc has got drastically reduced.

These structural adjustment policies being implemented by the government is already having a very negative impact on the livelihood of landless rural workers, small and marginal farmers, urban poor women, children, adivasis and fishing community. These policies have resulted in a growing impoverishment and deterioration in living conditions through the price mechanism ie., deregulation of domestic prices and integrating of those prices in the world market including agricultural prices. The immediate impact of such policies is visible in the cut-back or withdrawal of social service programmes, subsidies, public distribution system and elimination of preferential credit through banks. These policies lead further to elimination of labour legislation and the non-enforcement of minimum wages. The strengthening of the social property market is another consequence leading to alienation and mortgaging of lands in Tamilnadu, primarily affecting the small and marginal farmers, forcing them into the rural and urban informal labour market.

#### **4. ATTACK ON DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS**

The last five years have witnessed a virtual police raj in Tamilnadu, with all dissent to the ruling government being met with brutal violence inflicted by the police or the mafia. Lawyers, journalists, business people, academics, members of opposition political parties and social activists have been repeatedly beaten up. The police have almost become a wing of the ruling party indulging in a series of unconstitutional and illegal actions. Severe curbs have been placed on organising meetings and freedom of expression including sticking of posters. Repeated efforts were made to muzzle the press. On several occasions prisoners have been beaten up in custody especially in Madras and Madurai prisons. The conditions in prisons are deplorable violating all constitutional norms and international human rights standards.

Vachati, Ponnur, Karanai, Kodiankulam and several tribal and Dalits villages have witnessed the most brutal violence, sexual assault on women and complete looting of the village by the police. The police in numerous cases shot and killed people at point blank range without resorting to the conventional requirements of lathi charge and tear gas.

Tamilnadu has now become famous for illegal detention and custodial violence including death of children and rape of women. Tamilnadu is one of the States which used TADA most indiscriminately against political dissenters, minorities especially Muslims, workers, etc. When State-level agitations are organised by opposition parties, thousands of supporters and leaders are taken into preventive custody denying them their right to protest.

Dalits all over the State have been targeted for brutal violence unleashed by police on numerous occasions. Any protest from Dalits and fishing people has been met with extreme measure of police firing. The number of people killed by police firing, especially of landless labourers and small peasants, is alarming. On several occasions strikes by the working class have met with violence unleashed by the police and goondas in their effort to break the strike and support the management.

There has been a phenomenal rise of the mafia working for the senior members of the ruling party with the connivance of the police. During the last 10 years the rise of goonda-raj has resulted in the suppression of all dissent by the authoritarian action of the government.

In the name of security the rights of thousands of citizens are violated whenever the head of government decides to travel. The flagrant flaunting of crores ill-gotten wealth at the marriage of the foster son of the Chief Minister revealed the scant respect with which democratic values are treated by the rulers in Tamilnadu. In numerous appointments, allotment of contracts, etc., members of a particular caste have been given preference by the government machinery violating several canons of the constitution. The undemocratic practices, insertion of hundreds of full page advertisements in the newspapers carrying the pictures of the Chief Minister practically every other day at the cost of the public exchequer, the erection of giant cutouts of the Chief Minister and the decoration of several kilometers of the road when the Chief Minister goes for a public function are the hallmark of an authoritarian culture and will not stand up to judicial scrutiny of an independent judiciary. On several occasions the judiciary itself has not used its powers for guaranteeing the accountability of public servants, thereby raising a question about its independence and impartiality. The worst attack on democratic rights was the government's action to stall holding of elections to panchayat and Municipal bodies.

## **5. ROOT OUT CORRUPTION**

The Bank Fraud, the dis-investment of Public Sector Fraud, the sugar Fraud, the Bailadila mine deal, Enron deal, Railway ABB deal, Telecom scam and now the hawala scam reveals the all-pervasive disintegration of the values of the elite and the deep rooted nexus between politicians, bureaucrats and Indian and foreign business.

Institutionalised corruption has reached unprecedented levels in Tamilnadu. The business/industrialist-politician-bureaucratic-nexus in siphoning off crores of rupees of public wealth and common village resources has resulted in untold hardship to the people. It has created a virtual parallel economy functioning through the hawala market. Senior members of government have been accused of looting of peoples' resources. The gross assets of all those found guilty of corrupt practices should be confiscated and these resources be used for welfare programmes of the poor. The land scam alone in Tamilnadu amounts to several thousands crores where thousands of acres of land have been taken away from small and medium farmers by prominent members in the government and their relative. Natural mineral resources like granite, river sand, timber, sandal wood etc. have been illegally appropriated in huge quantities and the profits ploughed into the hawala racket. It is alleged that many business deals and permissions for establishing industries, tourist resorts, etc. are made by government functionaries after receiving huge payoffs and guaranteeing non-compliance with basic industrial, environmental and labour standards. The recent exposures regarding misappropriation of public funds in the cremation shed case, free school uniforms, free sarees and colour T.V sets meant for Panchayats reveal the extent that corruption has reached in Tamilnadu.

## **6. ECONOMIC TASKS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

### **6.1 ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME**

The most important and urgent task civil society and government is to eradicate poverty. The single most important step is to halt the implementation of the present package of economic policies influenced by IMF-World Bank and TNC's as it only useful for enriching the top 3 % rich at the cost of the destruction of our eco-system and livelihood patterns. The economic, political and social tasks outlined below is ultimately to eradicate poverty and build a society that is humane, just and democratic. Unfortunately the GATT-WTO package also cuts at the root of our resource base and glorifies an unequal trading relationship in its efforts to promote the markets and profits of TNC's.

One important weapon of the State to alleviate poverty are the poverty alleviation programmes whose subsidy component is sought to be done away with under IMF-World Bank Pressure. The poverty alleviation programmes, especially in the rural areas have been implemented without changes in the unequal agrarian structure and hence most of the benefits have gone to the rich. The implementation of the programme should be by panchayats and peoples' committees and not left to be decided by the bureaucracy. This will prevent the gross mismatch between the peoples' needs, local resources and what schemes are actually implemented. The identification process should be done by the elected members of the panchayat and not the bureaucracy. The poverty alleviation programmes must be improved and strengthened.

### **6.2 BASIC HUMAN NEEDS FOR ALL**

Spiraling prices, unemployment and under-employment with very low wages, displacement of people due to mega development projects, export-oriented agricultural and industrial policy and the free rein given to foreign capital and companies proving detrimental to the very survival and growth of the small scale and informal sector. Non-implementation of land reforms, an education system that pushes out majority of children, shoddy functioning of primary health care centres have altogether pushed the bulk of our population to a situation of not being able to fulfill their basic needs in terms of food, shelter, clothing, education and health care.

It is an accepted fact that endemic hunger, unemployment, child labour and breakdown of PDS today is the result of poverty and is not due to non-availability of food in the market. What food is available in the open market is no more accessible to the poor. Employment guarantee with living wages must be provided for adults. The public distribution system should be expanded to ensure sustainable food security. Peoples' right to housing to be protected and promoted through conservation of traditional housing resources and subsidised scale of housing materials.

All people should be guaranteed safe drinking water, safe environment, sanitation, waste management, public transport, electricity, cooking fuel. Free compulsory quality education should be mandatarily provided. Health for all by 2000 AD to be achieved by stopping privatisation of health facilities, controlling of the prices of drugs and drastically improving the services of government hospitals and primary health centres. Basic needs must be guaranteed in the Indian Constitution as fundamental rights. Powers should be transferred by the State to local government bodies, to enable them to function as the third tier of government. Local government institutions should be empowered to guarantee and provide the basic needs for people to live in security, peace and dignity.

### **6.3. CONTROL PRICE RISE – STRENGTHEN PDS**

Glaring inequalities, unemployment, under-employment, tardy enforcement of prescribed minimum wages, etc has pushed the majority of the population in the country below poverty line. This is aggravated by sky-rocketing prices of essential commodities, including life-saving drugs. Spiraling prices of essential commodities is affecting the common people adversely. The strategy of liberalisation, cut in food subsidies, de-regulation of monopoly houses and foreign companies along with black marketing and hoarding are pushing up prices at a rapid pace.

During the last five years every single item that constitutes the daily living needs of millions has gone up by nearly 100%. Costs of rice, wheat, pulses, tea, salt, edible oil, vegetables etc have increased by two to three times its original price. Prices of all essential commodities in the open market also must be drastically reduced and further price rise curbed.

The public distribution system should ensure food security for all. The PDS should be expanded bringing into its ambit 14 essential commodities. Prices of these commodities

should be reduced by 50%. The sharp increase in the issue price of food grains in the PDS led to a significant fall in the off-take of wheat and rice to the extent of 50%. This has had a serious negative effect on the nutrition and absolute hunger of landless and small landholding classes. This means that a large number of people are now more hungry than before the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Policies.

#### **6.4. PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture is the backbone of our country. Sustainable national food security is a must for a country to be self-reliant. Food security should be extended to one and all. In order to achieve this, people's rights on agricultural land, water, common resources, seeds, traditional agricultural techniques and strategies should be fully protected. The peoples' access to the common resources should be combined with food security. We should pledge to eradicate hunger and malnutrition. Sustainable food security involves strengthening the livelihood security of all members within a household by assuring both physical and economic access to a balanced diet.

Eco-friendly technologies should be promoted for enhancing the productivity, profitability and sustainability of agriculture.

The bio-diversity of our natural resources have been affected a great deal by the multinational business and large industries. Taking immediate steps to protect our bio-diversity is therefore the need of the hour.

The new Agricultural Policy has given rise to the practice of cultivating mono-culture cash crops for export. Horticulture and Floriculture for the export is gaining momentum alarmingly. As only those agricultural products that have market-demand are cultivated increasingly, there is a shortage of food-grains, which are needed by the common people for their daily life. This policy should be reversed. Bio-agricultural methods should be encouraged and our traditional and indigenous bio-agricultural practices protected.

To protect and promote the interests of dry land farmers, alternate land management and appropriate agricultural practices should be implemented along with providing fertilizers at subsidised cost and long-term credit facilities. Attempts to curtail subsidies for fertilizers should be given up. Such a step not only affects the food security but also affects negatively the terms of trade of the farmers and the cost of production. Farmers alone should be given the right to decide the price of their agricultural produce.

## **6.5 IMPLEMENT LAND REFORMS**

Land reforms should be implemented in right earnest. Cultivable lands should be distributed to landless agricultural labourers.

Increasingly farmers are being alienated from their lands. Lands are being purchased by private commercial interests and by finance companies. This should be put to an end to.

The practices of the real estate business buying agricultural lands, irrigation tanks, village common lands and converting them into residential flats should be banned. Relevant reforms should be made in the Land Ceiling Act so as to make acquisition and distribution of land for the poor easy. Any more amend the lands laws to permit TNCs to buy agricultural land should be resisted.

All those lands held under binami names are illegal. They should be taken over by the Government with no further delay and distributed among the landless.

## **6.6 PROTECT WATER RESOURCES**

All the important major rivers of our country should be linked and the water should be equally distributed among the states. The representatives of the farmers of both Karnataka and Tamilnadu who benefit from the Cauvery waters should come together for a dialogue and find a permanent solution for the fair distribution of Cauvery water.

Irrigation programmes and projects are to be speeded up to bring solace and relief to those farmers who suffer without water and are eternally waiting for the rains. There should be fund allocation to do de-silting of existing lakes, irrigation tanks, and ponds. They should be regularly monitored.

The practice of intensive extraction of ground water through deep bore-wells has brought about depletion of ground-water resources. The use of ground water resources for agro-business, commercial farms, industries should be strictly regulated.

Steps should be taken to protect all those lakes and ponds in the cities to prevent the depletion of ground water in the cities and also to improve the quantity of ground water.

## **6.7 CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES: PROTECT ENVIRONMENT**

The destruction of forests by the big industrial houses, contractors, politicians and forest department officers, should be halted immediately. Destruction of forests in the hilly regions of Kodaikanal, Palani, Nilgiris, Anamalai and such other western ghat regions, in the name of development activities, should be stopped with immediate effect. Growing diverse species of trees and cultivating in the natural condition of the forests should be preserved for the forest dwellers. Plans for cultivating tea, coffee, pepper, cardamom and such other cash crops should be regulated.

Displacement of adivasis from forests using various reasons should be necessarily and immediately stopped. All those lands that have so far been forcefully alienated from the tribals and indigenous communities should be returned to them with immediate effect.

The present forest bill which proposes to hand over forest lands to big industries and multinational corporations will cause great destruction to the forests and their resources, affect the ecological balance and adversely affect the lives of the tribal people. This bill should be withdrawn immediately and substituted by the People's Forest Bill which consists of various welfare measures like joint forest management, regenerating forest lands; the control and power over the forests to be vested with the adivasis; restoration of lands alienated from the local tribals.

In the coastal regions of Tamilnadu the mono-culture shrimp industries should be banned. The intensive use of ground water resources using borewells, to serve the needs of mono-culture shrimp industries, should be banned immediately. The Tamilnadu Aquaculture Regulation Act should be amended and the mono-culture shrimp industries should be completely banned. All initiatives in the guise of developmental projects that affect the coastal eco-system, the marine resources, livelihood of the coastal people, degradation of cultivable lands and mangrove lands, should be stopped with immediate effect. The Government funds, bank loans, insurance protections, tax-exemption, tax-concession etc. which have so far been made available to such projects should be withdrawn.

The anti-people developmental projects such as construction East-Coast Road project, which displaces the people from their traditional habitat and destroys the common resources of the community in the name of development, should be out-ridghtly condemned and given up. Those displaced families should be adequately compensated

and alternative land resettlement should be given to them. The Government should not undertake any developmental project what so ever without the consent and participation of the people concerned. The second phase of work in the East Coast Road project, the Cuddalore-Kanyakumari highways, should not be resumed till the Environmental Impact Assessment of the Ministry of Environment and Forests is completed and till the people in that region give their whole hearted consent.

The large amount of toxic wastes emanating out of the chemical industries, petro-chemical industries, pharmaceutical industries, atomic energy and defense related industries owned by Indian and foreign big industrial houses, public sector organisations and multinational organisations, is drained into the sea and cause great havoc to the marine resources and further contaminate the ground water resources. Such industries should not be permitted. Such existing industries should install pollution treatment plants with latest technologies within a time-frame and thus environmental well-being should be safe-guarded. If this is not done, within a stipulated time period such industries should be closed down.

River such as Cauvery, Vaigai, Palar, Amaravathi, Noyyal, Bavani and Thamirabarani, which are the very life-line of millions of people are highly polluted as the chemical wastage of industries drains into them. Thus people's life and livelihood are endangered. This should be immediately put an end to.

The Karur-based dye-industries, Thirupur-garment industries, leather industries of Dindigul and North Arcot, Pugalur-paper industries etc and such other polluting industries which affect the environment and the very livelihood of people to a great extent should necessarily establish the required treatment plants, within a time-limit and thus check the environmental hazardous thoroughly. The production patterns of such industries, their affluent-treatment methods etc should be subjected to the scrutiny of a high-level expert committee. This committee shall be empowered to survey and monitor these industries. Based on the findings of such surveys or studies, steps should be taken either to close down the industry in question or to improve the pollution treatment plants as the case may be in all regions. 'People's monitoring groups' entrusted with powers to protect and promote environment-safety production methods should be established.

The State Pollution Control Board should be restructured in such a way that it ensures scientific and impartial way of functioning. People should be informed about the

production process of any industry, big or small, and public debate should be called for before the permission is granted.

In Tamilnadu, in the name of industrial development more and more industries, which have an adverse effect on the livelihood and environmental safety of the people, are coming up. Hazardous industries affecting the livelihood and environment and those technologies that are outdated are encouraged and permitted to enter Tamilnadu.

Near Madras, at Gummidipoondi Sipcot campus, at an investment of Rs.6.25 crores, a Nylon 6.6 industry is being established as a joint venture between Du Pont, one of America's biggest industrial corporation and The Thappar group, India's third biggest industrial corporation. More than 300 acres of Sipcot land, which has been allocated for small-scale industries is given to this company by way of lease and also by sale. Daily 10 lakhs of gallons of water will be pumped out from Arani River for this project, which is the daily water-requirement for 60,000 people. The concession in electricity charges amounts to Rs.8.9 crore for this industry.

This project uses extremely hazardous raw materials like cadmium sulphide, lead, acetate, potassium iodide, titanium phenyl, phosphoric acid, cupric acetate, dioxide, methanol & asbestos. In the production of Nylon 6,6 large quantities of solid, liquid and gaseous pollutants are released in large quantities. These pollutants destroy plants, cultivation and turn green lands into deserts. These emissions will result in acid rain. This industrial plant, originally proposed to be constructed at Goa, faced stiff opposition from the people of Goa. But the Government of Tamilnadu extended a red carpet welcome to this project. This factory should be stopped at all cost and driven out of our country.

Sterlite Industries (India) Limited is setting up a factory for copper melting and purifying lubricant oil in Tuticorin. The copper factory would produce 350 tonnes acid every day. The nitric acid that is released during production process contains poisonous metal mixture in it. The metallic gas emissions pollute the air and cause very many adverse effects. The emissions from lubricant oil purification plant are drained into the sea and thereby pollute the sea water, which causes a real threat to our well-beings. These factors highly pollute the environment and contaminate the soil.

Inhalation of copper dust and smoke would cause itching sensation in the wind pipe, metallic taste in the mouth, vomiting sensation, metallic smoke fever and several other diseases. The Sterlite Industry, which is injurious to the people and to the environment, which has been driven out of Maharashtra, should not be given a green signal here.

## **6.8 TOURISM**

The changes in the global economic order has encouraged India to advertise tourism as a cheap and safe entertainment for the upper class people of Japan, Europe and America. The Tamilnadu government's policy that by 2020 A.D. tourism would be one of the major economic activities of Tamilnadu is highly objectionable and deserves downright condemnation. Tourism in places like Kodaikanal, Ooty, Yelagiri and the rest of the Western Ghat regions has affected the ecological well being and the welfare of the people there to a great extent. There is no need to improve tourism in these places. In these regions land is alienated. Water level and natural resources have depleted enormously. Thousands of trees have been felled. The traditional trades of the inhabitants have suffered a lot. Development control rules have for ever been so blatantly flouted by the Tourist resorts. Uprooted from their villages and livelihood, the people of these regions are forced into cheap labour leading to poor standards of living. Tourism has changed the very face of people's tradition and traditional values. People have now been turned into commodities of entertainment and enjoyment. Tamil culture and tradition has been commercialised.

Coastal tourism is spreading dangerously affecting the very livelihood of fishing communities and the life of the people living in nearby villages. Natural resources, marine resources and also the lives and well-being of fishermen should be protected. No government has the right to exploit its people or natural resources, using them as the products of tourism. It has greatly affected the ecological balance of the coastal regions and also the indigenous practices and trades of the inhabitants of the coastal areas. Sale of land for the purposes of tourist resorts, recreation clubs, restaurants along the coast should be strictly prohibited.

## **6.9 SELF-RELIANT INDUSTRIAL POLICY NEEDED; STRENGTHEN INFORMAL ECONOMY**

The industrial policy pursued by the government of Tamilnadu has only served to benefit the big industrial houses, agro-business, export oriented companies, foreign companies and big business interests and ruined the life systems of traditional occupations, cottage and village industries, self-employed and small scale industries. The indifference shown to sick industries and those closed due to lockouts has thrown thousands of workers into joblessness and poverty. We need an industrial policy that is employment oriented, that respects ILO labour standards, natural resources, the environment, traditional knowledge and skill of the people and abolishes child labour. We need to strengthen our public sector, indigenous industry and halt the open-door policy to Transnational Corporations. Strong regulatory framework has to be put into place for all these issues. Entry of foreign capital should be decided on State's priorities and technology needs and the industry's environment track record. Indian big business and TNC's should not be permitted to manufacture all sorts of consumer goods, foods etc., which the small producers can produce efficiently.

The Government and the Federations of big industry are pushing small scale industries (SSI) to adopt contemporary technologies to enhance their global competitiveness. The export oriented sector of the SSI will benefit but at the expenses of thousands of non-export oriented SSI. The reservation of products for exclusive production of SSI must continue. The smallest of the SSI must be protected. The policy of reservation, exemption from excise duty and other fiscal benefits should be continued. Good infra-structural facilities and credit facilities must be provided by government for SSI.

Even today a very large percentage of urban and rural poor do not depend on their livelihood on the globally linked market. The rise of the global market means their destruction. It is from nature and bio-mass and the informal unorganised sector from which they derive their essential needs, goods and services. The State does very little to protect and strengthen this sector. State policy must recognise the immense contribution of this sector including the self-employed and take steps to prohibit the entry of particular goods at the cost of the production and distribution of goods and services by the informal sector.

## **6.10 STOP DISMANTLING PUBLIC SECTOR**

A flourishing public sector is very essential for our self-reliance. All efforts to dismantle the public sector must be halted. The policy of withdrawal of budgetary support and reducing orders to public sectors units must be reversed. Numerous industries are forced to go sick by the government's actions. This results in a gross threat to the jobs of thousands of workers. Disinvestment of the public sector and opening up the public sector to TNC's is a grave threat to the core sectors of our economy.

## **6.11 FISCAL POLICY AND MONETARY CONTROL**

The fiscal policy of raising budgetary revenues mainly through indirect taxes, which badly affect the poor should be stopped. Our fiscal policy needs drastic changes and a long-term fiscal policy that is largely dependent on direct taxes should be applied. Taxes on property, wealth, income, excise, professions etc should be drastically increased and enforced. Those with tax arrears should be treated as criminals and severely punished. Tax holidays and tax concessions given to transnational corporations, joint ventures in the core sector of the economy, export-oriented industries, hotel industry, shrimp industries and deep-sea fishing vessels should be withdrawn. Instead stiff taxes need to be imposed. The answer to flight of capital or a parallel black economy cannot be given to such unpatriotic looters; tax concessions for investment. Every tax concession given to the rich means an increasing burden on the poor and middle classes. Similarly income and wealth of rich farmers, plantations, agro-business and finance companies engaging in commercial tree planting should be heavily taxed.

## **6.12 ALTERNATIVE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

There should be no amendment of the Indian Patent Act of 1970 which will erode India's sovereign right to develop domestic Research and Development. Further, an amendment will open the floodgates of TNC's to hundreds of patents in the sectors of drugs, agriculture and micro organisms.

Indigenous technology should be developed to provide for a strong base of self reliance and a moratorium placed on import of foreign technology. Our science and technology policy should be directed towards development of modernised and appropriate technology, protection and support for our research and development and promotion of organic agricultural practices and technologies. Our scientific and technological

community should receive all support to evolve technologies that support and strengthen peoples' traditional technologies. We do not require obsolete TNC imported technology. It is this model of science and technology that is the basis for the destruction of our resources and eco-system and the worsening living condition for the vast majority of our people. Only environment-friendly technologies developed through our research and development should be permitted to be used in any industry.

It is the science and technology of Du Pont, Sterlite Industries, Pharmaceutical, chemical, textile, petrochemical industries, distilleries and tanneries; the technology of green revolution agro-business, and deep sea fishing vessels; the technology used to construct MRTS project, East Coast Road, large dams and Defense projects that has resulted in exploitation of the lands and resources of the common people, displacement of thousands of peoples and destruction of land, water and environment. All Science and Technology, Research and Development must be implemented with respect for the sustainable livelihood of people, land, environment, water and other natural resources allowing them to be conserved in proportion to the rate of production and consumption.

Science and Technology should augment rather than displace human skills and should include the integration of traditional knowledge, utilization of renewable energy resources and methods which are environmentally appropriate and non-destructive.

## **6.13 EDUCATION FOR ALL**

In all schools primary level education should be imparted through Tamil medium only. In all schools only one common curriculum should be adhered. Existing system of poor schools and poor educational system for poor children and schools with all comforts and curriculum for the rich should be changed.

More than 10,000 teaching posts which remain vacant in Tamilnadu till date should be filled up with immediate effect. In accordance with the increasing population new schools should be opened. Up to six years children should not be sent to school and encouraged to indulge in play activities since this alone is good for the well being of children. As things stand today those who can afford send their children to quality pre-schools at the age of 2 or two and half itself. Thus the Integrated Child Development Services(ICDS) should undertake necessary steps to extend such pre-school educational facilities to the poor children. Lakhs and lakhs of children drop out of school, unable to continue their studies beyond primary and middle school level. To change this dismal

scenario and to provide quality education, the teacher student ratio should be 1:30. In all schools playground, toilet facilities, drinking water, library and such other facilities should be made available.

Tamilnadu compulsory elementary education bill should be brought into force with immediate effect. The concept of pressurizing and punishing the parents in this bill should be done away with and instead the educational authorities should be made responsible. There should be legal guarantee for free and quality education. The Yashpal Committee Report's recommendations to improve the quality of education such as lessening the burden of children, learning in a happy atmosphere, etc. should be implemented.

The self-financing colleges that are coming up so rapidly, viewing education as a profitable business should be checked. The attempts at privatising the existing educational institutions for higher studies should be stopped. Strict monitoring should be there to check whether the existing self-financing colleges adhere to the guidelines set forth by the University Grant Commission and of the rules and regulations of the Universities in question. If any of them is found to be deviating they should be closed down immediately. The high court verdict regarding capitation fee should be given due respect in Tamilnadu and its guidelines enforced.

To analyse the nature and extent of relationship between the State and University; between industrial organisations and the University objectively and intellectually and set forth several guiding principles in this connection a high level expert committee should be formed.

The funds and grants given to the socially and economically backward students should be given to them at the beginning of the year itself. Sufficient quality hostel facilities should be made available to these students. The government should take steps to enable the teachers discharge their duties effectively with concern and dedication.

## **6.14 STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH**

The government should take steps without delay to realise its goal of "Health for all by 2000 A.D."

In government's fund allocations, just 1.5 % is set aside for the Health care. As per the World Health Organisation's guiding principle this should be raised to 5%.

Though the functioning of the public health care services are not up to the mark, lakhs of rural and urban poor working class people depend on it. Hence all attempts to close existing health care institutions should be stopped. The basic infrastructure facilities to these hospitals should be made available along with sufficient supply of medicines. Our health care system should be reformed and reconstructed. Steps should be taken to improve the quality of health care imparted in the primary health care centres in rural areas. Legislation should be enacted for issuing license and regulating private hospitals and nursing homes.

Government hospitals should stock and use only those medicines that have the basic 160 generic formation as recommended by the World Health Organisation. Also permission should not be granted to the pharmaceutical companies to use medicines which have ingredients other than the prescribed 160 generic formulations. Pharmacies also should be keep in stock and sell only such medicines as prescribed by the World Health Organisation.

The Tamilnadu Medicine Distribution Association functions adhering strictly to the norm of producing and stocking only 300 basic medicines. As a first step, government as well as private hospitals and nursing homes should adhere to this norm of using these 300 basic medicines only.

Thousands of poor rural and urban persons are forced to sell their organs to save their families. This is a violent onslaught on human rights. Private hospitals and doctors mint money this way. To avoid this crudest violation of human rights, the Human Organs Transplantation Act should be strictly implemented.

The rights and duties of the patients, particularly the right to information, should be legally enforced.

## **6.15 HOUSING AS A BASIC RIGHT**

Housing is not four walls and a roof. Housing is a basic right of all. Housing should be made a Fundamental Right of people to live in a place in security and dignity. However, increasingly due to the new economic policies, developmental projects pauperisation of the peasantry and speculation on land, the rural and urban poor are pushed into a state of homelessness.

The government of Tamilnadu should immediately enact a comprehensive Housing Rights legislation to guarantee and provide adequate housing for all. The legislation must guarantee the right to adequate housing, common housing resources and building materials, safe environment, right to information and protection against eviction. And if people have to be relocated then a comprehensive set of rights for resettlement should form part of the legislation. Dwellers Unions of the inadequately housed should be formed and registered at the village Panchayat and municipal ward levels. The Dwellers Unions together with local government bodies should be empowered to hold in trusteeship and to regulate and manage the entitlement provided under this act.

The State housing policy of the government of Tamilnadu attempts to solve the housing crisis through the market ie builders, real estate agents, finance companies, NRI's and industrialists, without recognising the fact that it is these forces that destroy the housing resources so much needed by the poor to build their homes.

The policy of the government to resolve the housing crisis through mere substandard house construction programmes should be reviewed. Millions of our people build their own homes with their own skills from bio-mass and locally available housing resources. It is the duty of the State to protect these resources and enable the poor to adequately house themselves. The answer to the housing crisis is for the State first of all to guarantee the socio-economic and political conditions for people to adequately house themselves. Commercial exploitation of all resources needed by people to house themselves in dignity should be prohibited.

The government and its agencies are in fact the single biggest creator of homelessness. Under pressure from international finance agencies and in spite of the promises of housing for the people, successive governments have brought about the increasing privatisation of the housing industry. As a result the housing industry has become a means of acquiring as well as of investing unaccounted wealth. This has reduced housing beyond the means of the common working people who then have to resort to squatting and living in inhuman conditions.

Low cost, good quality house construction materials should be supplied at subsidised prices, through a public distribution system managed by Dwellers Co-operatives. Shortage of land is a myth. The Urban Land Ceiling Act should be strictly enforced and the acquired land distributed as housing sites to all urban poor families.

## **7. POLITICAL TASKS FOR DEMOCRATIC POLITY**

### **7.1 STATE AUTONOMY IS CONSTITUTIONAL AND ESSENTIAL**

Genuine Federalism alone can broaden and deepen the bonds of unity and integrity among the people of various regions in India. Tamilnadu should enjoy genuine autonomy-political, legislative, economic, fiscal and administrative, without submitting itself to the indignity of Centre's domination. The Indian constitution has to be amended accordingly.

Greater powers and financial resources to Tamilnadu should be devolved as recommended by the Sarkaria Commission. The arbitrary use of Article 356 of the Constitution should be stopped. If this is not possible, Article 356 should be repealed.

The revival and efficient functioning of the Inter-State Council is urgent. Real decentralisation needs to be carried out by conferring more power and financial resources to elected bodies at all levels of Panchayat.

The office of Governors should not be used as agents of the party in power at the Centre. Ensure constitutional accountability of the Governor by making necessary amendments to the Constitution.

### **7.2 DECENTRALISED DEMOCRACY SHOULD BECOME A REALITY**

As per the objective of the Constitutional 73rd and 74th Amendment, serious efforts should be made to enable people to have the right to governance and to promote grassroots democracy.

The 1994 Tamilnadu Panchayati Raj Act has panchayati raj only in title but does not include the objective and characteristics of panchayati raj. The panchayat legislation should be redrafted to wholesomely achieve the objectives of panchayati raj.

Elections to the Panchayats and Nagar Palikas should be immediately held. Reasons for delay in holding panchayati elections like, political consideration, time for demarcation of wards, resource crunch, etc should be set aside and elections should be held immediately. Attempts to stall elections through filing cases in courts should be effectively dealt with by prevailing in the courts about the paramount importance of

Panchayati Raj and the need for Elections held immediately. Enumeration work to access the population of Backward classes should be immediately taken and proper representation given.

Planning must begin from the Gram Sabha and their voice should be final. Decisions regarding land sale and transfer, land alienation, setting of large projects - power, irrigation, defense etc, location of industry, hotels, agro-business, marine processing etc must first of all be discussed in concerned grama sabha and their decision should be prior and final. The village Panchayat must be the agent of the Grama Sabha. The Gram Sabha's right to information must have statutory sanction in the Tamilnadu Panchayat Act. At present as per the Constitutional amendment there is a 3 tier Government. Village, intermediary and District panchayats should not be merely support structures of the State and Central governments to implement schemes. Instead the Panchayat Institution should be empowered to function independently with all the powers to fulfill the objectives of the Constitutional 73rd and 74th amendments. The XI schedule of the Constitution, which lists the rights and powers of Panchayats, should be immediately transferred to the Panchayat institutions. To rejuvenate the process of decentralised democracy and devolution of powers and for the effective functioning of the Panchayat, supportive structures and procedures should be assigned. Panchayats must be accountable to the collective body of the people. The largesy of bureaucracy from the village panchayat to the district committee should be subordinate and accountable to the elected members of the local institutions. The control of rural development agencies with the district administration over the Panchayati institutions found in chapter 10 of the Tamilnadu Panchayat Act is violative of the spirit of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and thus must be immediately amended.

All matters of education and health care including the related institutions and personnel be brought within the control of panchayat bodies. Decisions of the panchayats pertaining to planning implementation etc should be final.

### **7.3 CLEAN AND SENSITIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

The present Public Administration system with its in-built colonial institutions and procedures needs a radical overhaul. A new administrative structure, with new systems, procedures and tools to promote a new work culture has to be built up. Public administration should function as an independent but accountable body responsive to the needs of the common man and work as an effective instrument to fulfill the

mandate of the Constitution and achieve radical socio-economic transformation to benefit the millions of poor. The alienation between the rulers and the ruled continues. A new orientation to the role of the civil servant needs to be provided. Honest civil servants at all levels should be protected from harassment and high handedness. Corruption at all levels of the administrative structure has become all-pervasive and administrators function as conduits for corrupt politicians and powerful business interests. Today even the poor have to bribe their way to a community or birth certificate. Every senior administrator must make public his or her gross wealth annually. Secondly simple institutional mechanisms should be set in place for ordinary citizens to file complaints or initiate legal proceedings against corrupt or insensitive administrators.

## **7.4 ELECTORAL REFORMS FOR FAIR AND FREE ELECTIONS**

Elections are an important democratic function. Increasingly however this is being influenced by money power, mafia tactics and use of government machinery by the ruling party. Electoral Reforms are urgently needed. Political parties and their candidates should strictly follow the revised code of conduct by the Election Commission of India.

Political parties should not field candidates with records of criminal and economic offence or with known communal and caste bias and those who have committed offence against women and weaker sections of society.

The Election Commission should strictly monitor the election process with independent citizens committee in each constituency. The material collected should be scientifically documented. A high level expert committee should be constituted to prepare a status report on fair and free elections which should be placed before the parliament and submitted to the Supreme Court.

Political parties should publicly declare details about their candidates including (a) the record of public service and/or professional achievement; (b) the personal and family assets and sources of income (c) details about convictions, prosecutions or charges of penal nature if any against them.

Section 13(A) of the Income Tax Act insists that every political party file a return but exempts the parties from paying tax. This must be changed as to effect accounting

of every paisa of every political party. Political parties should not be exempt from following the Income Tax Act. All Political parties must submit a detailed account of income and expenditure to a public auditor, preferably a representative of the Controller and Auditor General of India and a certificate obtained. Such certificates should be submitted to the Election Commission and only then should a political party be allowed to contest.

Every Company registered under the Companies Act and associations of merchants, traders, and Industries should publish a list of donations, commissions and consultancy fees paid by it to a political person, a candidate or a political party. These declarations should be certified by a reputed auditor. Such a certificate should be made available to the Chief Election Commission and Income Tax Officer. There should be a fresh delimitation of constituencies based on the 1991 census. The Recommendations on Electoral Reforms under the chairmanship of Law Minister Dinesh Goswami must be urgently implemented.

There should be statutory backing for some of the important terms under the model code of conduct like use of official machinery and personnel, issue of advertisement in newspapers at the cost of public exchequer, use of official media for partisan coverage of political news, announcement or sanctioning of any financial grants in any form or making out payments out of discretionary funds, ban on transfer of officers and staff connected with election work etc.,

The present electoral system is inadequate for nurturing democracy. The proportional representation system or list system should be examined and developed and efforts made to replace the present electoral system.

State funding of elections similar to the electoral process in France, Italy, Germany and the U.S.A should be introduced. Earnings from corrupt practices are often invested in the election campaign. This leads to excessive expenditure at elections. This needs to be curbed. The burden of expenditure should be removed from the candidates shoulders. State funding of elections, especially the French model, should be introduced. Assistance by the State should be in kind. All work concerned with electioneering should be paid directly by the State. Pamphlets, leaflets, posters, handbills and all other publicity material including elections manifesto and statements should be printed by the State machinery at the request of the candidate. All help should be extended to organise public meetings, providing halls or buildings, open air platforms, providing

public address system. Radio and T.V time should be organised and made available to the candidate. All candidates are treated equally whether they are party candidates or independents. Even drivers, oil and petrol should be provided by the State. During the election period neither the candidate nor members of his/her immediate family can withdraw funds from their bank accounts. Coupons can be given for his/her immediate personal expenditure. The political parties and the candidates' supporters are prohibited from ploughing in cash on the election. If any cash is spent on the election by the candidate or members of his/her family or by the candidate's supporters, the election should be declared void.

Previously the Election Commission used to bring out a report after every General Election detailing the experience gained in holding the Parliamentary and Assembly elections, the difficulties encountered and the drawbacks found in the procedures adopted. The Election Commission should present without further delay the reports on the General elections of 1989 & 1991. Similarly the Commissioner should present a full report of this oncoming general election.

The right to recall elected candidates must be given statutory sanction.

## **7.5 PROMOTE SECULARISM AND DEFEAT COMMUNALISM**

Every effort should be made by all members of society to prevent the rise of political forces who use religious and casteist propaganda to discriminate against others and for economic political power.

The constitutional values of secularism and the rights of minorities should be upheld and widely propagated. The gradual growth of communal and right wing political forces in Tamilnadu with the patronage of the State machinery and ruling party should be exposed and fought politically and ideologically. Secularism as humanism must be propagated. All State institutions, public sector institutions including banks, insurance firms, etc should stop promoting the dominant religion through display of portraits, organising poojas, religious meetings etc. The genuine grievances of minority communities regarding discrimination should be addressed. No political party should be permitted to use religious sentiments for canvassing votes.

## **7.6 PROTECT AND PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS**

The Human Rights Courts set up by the Tamilnadu government is a sham. We want Human Rights Courts but we need independent Human Rights Courts imbued with human rights values and jurisprudence including international human rights standards. This should be done only after a statewide debate taking into confidence human rights organisations and activists.

If the provision to institute a state level Human Rights commission is implemented by the government, then such a commission should be a body independent of government with a decentralised structure. It should be constituted in a democratic manner representing experts from various fields connected with human rights protection. Its functioning should be democratic, transparent and accountable to the people. Its investigation team must be headed and operated independent of the police. The Commission should have the powers of summoning and even prosecuting in cases of gross violation of human rights.

Prosecution proceedings should be initiated against the members of the police force in Tamilnadu who have been allegedly guilty of rape, physical and sexual assault against women, illegal detention and atrocities against persons while in custody. There is an increase in police-related crimes on women. Mere eyewash measures such as R.D.O enquiries in the case of such crimes should be stopped and the accused be tried under IPC and Cr.P.C. The increase in custodial deaths, illegal detention, rape in police stations, denial of rights to freedom of expression and to form peoples' organisations, violence against citizens, etc., indicate the extra-constitutional authority of the police and their scant respect for human rights.

The human rights model curriculum drafted by NCERT and NHRC should become a compulsory course curriculum in schools and colleges. This again should be widely debated before finalisation in which human rights experts and activists should be engaged in developing teachers' aids and modifying the curriculum to suit local conditions.

Fully protecting the independence of the Tamilnadu Legal Aid and Advisory Board, the Legal Services Authority Act should be implemented. The Tamilnadu Legal Aid Board should be funded from the Consolidated Fund but it cannot become an agent of the government. The Legal Aid Board should work in close collaboration with human rights

organisations and voluntary bodies. Advocates on the Legal Aid Board panel should be empowered to inspect any police station and file complaints.

The provisions in various legislation require that prior sanction be obtained before a proceeding can be initiated against public servants. These provisions should be repealed. No public servant can be superior to an ordinary citizen.

To prevent discrimination, abuse and atrocities against Dalits and to punish those who perpetrate crimes against Dalits, the SC & ST Prevention of Atrocities Act and Rules should be strictly implemented.

A comprehensive legislation should be immediately enacted guaranteeing the right to information to individuals and organisations from government its agencies, public sector undertakings, local government bodies, Indian and Foreign companies, government aided institutions, public and private hospitals etc.

All persons detained under TADA should be immediately released unconditionally. If necessary the prosecution can try them under the normal provision of penal law. All other repressive detention laws like the Goondas Act should be repealed. A high level independent commission should be constituted to investigate the discriminations and arbitrary use of TADA and the authorities found guilty should be punished. The victims of arbitrary use of TADA and other detention laws should be compensated adequately.

The living conditions in Prisons in Tamilnadu are deplorable; often lacking medical facilities, standard food and proper sanitary condition. The rights of prisoners as enshrined in the Jail Manual and the Supreme Court orders are constantly violated. All detenus confined beyond the required period stipulated by the courts should be unconditionally released. On several occasions brutal violence has been unleashed in various prisons on under-trials and convicted persons. The perpetrators should be punished. The fibre glass partition in prisons should be immediately removed. There is urgent need for redrafting prison legislation to bring in appropriate changes in the outmoded Indian Prisons Act 1894 and State Jail Manuals. The NHRC has recently prepared a Draft Prisons Bill which the commission should circulate widely and organise state level discussions. Various measures to improve the conditions of prisons include the constitution of a statutory state level Prison and Correctional Board, gender perspective of prison reforms, tackling sexual abuse of women prisoners, separation

and protection of young offenders from abuse, guarantee access to lawyers, family visitors, unconditional release of women under-trials held for minor offence, etc.

The police system in Tamilnadu has to be radically restructured based on the recommendations of the Police Commission. Any move to change the Criminal Administration System to vest more powers with the police system is unconstitutional and undemocratic. Making forensic sciences subordinate to the police system is blatantly violative of the criminal justice system. The police system should be made accountable and sensitized to human rights values.

The independence of the judiciary in Tamilnadu is under severe strain. Any democracy requires clear separation of powers in practice between legislature, executive and judiciary. Yet the judiciary, especially at the lower levels, is constantly accused of favoritism, corruption and links with persons involved in illegal activities. Justice delayed is justice denied. The courts system must be restructured so as to make justice accessible to the common people. Ways must be developed for all judicial officers to be sensitized about human rights jurisprudence and international standards. Charges of corruption against judicial officers must be examined by a high powered committee and if found guilty they should be penalised.

Public interest litigation is an important and settled form for easy and quick access to justice for the underprivileged especially enforcing their fundamental rights. PIL is now an integral part of the Indian judiciary system of processional justice and the same cannot be curtailed in any manner by even the highest court of the land. The Supreme Court should reject the 1982 petition challenging PIL and should instead expand and deepen the operational strategies opened up by this radical jurisprudence - the only link between the constitution, justice and the under privileged.

## **8. SOCIAL TASKS AND THE RIGHT TO LIVELIHOOD**

### **8.1 WORKERS**

The right to social security should be made a fundamental right. A comprehensive and integrated social security law should be enforced.

The conditions of 29 crores wage earners in the unorganised sector are pathetic. The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 which happens to be the sole weapon to protect these workers has not been working effectively. Minimum wages notified by the Central and State governments continue to be below the poverty line level and are quite inadequate to meet the contemporary minimum needs of the worker. In accordance with the norms set forth by the Standing Labour Committee, the minimum wages under the Minimum wages Act should provide a decent standard of living for the workers and his/her family to be able to live in security and dignity. Central and State Governments must suitably revise the notified wages in different industries and occupations and what is fixed should be strictly implemented.

The controlling role of the State and politicians over co-operative societies must be prohibited. It is urgently needed to enact and implement the Model Co-operative Societies Act to enable co-operatives to grow as self-reliant grass root democratic organisations owned, managed and controlled by members for their economic and social betterment operating their business on co-operative principles.

The Old Age Validity and Survivors Pension Bill enabling the government to introduce pension scheme is inadequate and unsatisfactory and requires several amendments. It should be carried out in consultation with Trade Unions. This pension scheme must be implemented immediately. This scheme will benefit nearly 1.8 crore workers if implemented properly.

This pension scheme has to be linked to the Consumer Price Index and calculated on the last drawn salary. The other amendments put forward by the trade unions should be carried out to make the schemes more beneficial.

ESI coverage should be extended to all the workers including the seasonal and unorganised workers. Hospitalisation facilities should be extended to the family members also.

There is need for carrying out a fresh working class Income and Expenditure Survey for constructing and compiling a new series of Consumer Price Index numbers for industrial workers. The highly faulty index based on 1982 has failed to provide adequate standard of living in the context of spiraling prices. This is violate of the recommendations of the ILO as well as of the National Commission of Labour on the need to hold Family Budget surveys at intervals not exceeding ten years. Trade Unions have repeatedly pointed out the inaccuracies in the Consumer Price Index numbers.

Government has completely failed to take effective measures to stop price rise and protect consumers. Prices of essential commodities like rice, wheat, sugar, pulses, kerosene, diesel must be drastically reduced and controlled. Stringent measures of social disgrace and penal actions need to be taken against hoarders, black marketers and profiteers who are institutional in hiking up the prices. The public distribution system should cover larger sections of the toiling people both rural and urban areas and supply all essential commodities at cheap and reasonable prices.

The handloom sector is on the way of being elbowed out by the power loom sector and the textile mills, rendering lakhs of handloom weavers unemployed. The 22 varieties allotted for the handloom sector must be protected and all efforts be made to implement this notification. The Supreme Court also has upheld this allotment. The power loom sector has ceased to be just a small sector, accounting for 72% of total cloth production. Big capital has penetrated also in benami names in a major way and is pushing out the small operators.

The organised mill industry is being systematically dismantled and sought to be run in the unorganised sector by paying workers less than minimum wages and depriving them of all rights and facilities. The yarn market is manipulated by a close knit group of traders at the expenses of the small operators.

There appears to be a definite nexus between privitisation, export-oriented development, decline in employment opportunities and environmental degradation. Chemicals, Chlore-alkalies, petrochemical and pharmaceutical industries which are banned or rendered obsolete in U.S.A. and western countries are to be manufactured in India. Together with this India is becoming the best dumping ground for huge amounts of highly toxic waste. Germany the world's largest waste exporter shipped 48 million tonnes of metal waste and scrap to India in 1989. In 1992 India received 9916 million tonnes of non-ferrous metal waste including ashes and residues, copper, aluminium, zinc and tin waste and plastic. All this should be immediately banned to protect the interests of workers.

The working conditions in industries throughout the country are deplorable causing a number of occupational diseases to the workers. Safety, health and environment are ignored by the employers. Many accidents occur but nearly 35% of all employers did not submit annual report in regard to the accidents. Strict norms for safe working as well as for removal of hazards in every industrial activity needs to be implemented.

The Urban Ceiling Act in the name of exemptions has helped big industries to acquire vast quantities of land. Today, they are declaring these industrial units as sick in order to use the land for commercial purpose especially for real estate and elite housing. This practice should be immediately stopped eg Standard Motors, Binny.

A comprehensive Domestic Workers Act, which guarantees among other needs minimum wages, the setting-up of creches and provides for remedies against sexual assault should be enacted.

A comprehensive Agricultural Workers Act, that regulates employer-employee relations provides for remedies in case of dispute and provides social security, living wages and work guarantee should be enacted.

A comprehensive legislation and welfare schemes for construction workers should be urgently enacted. The enactment should provide for job security, pension, safety, wages and other social security measures along with bonus.

Lakhs of Anganwadi workers are denied adequate wages and other service benefits. Most women, perform a vital social work on women and child development. Anganwadi workers should be treated as regular employees and paid full wages and other service benefits at par with government employees.

## **8.2 WOMEN**

For ages women have been denied of their social, economic and political rights. Women as a group stand with others who are struggling against the denial of socio-economic and political rights. Women have borne the double and triple burdens of being women, being part of the oppressed and deprived castes or communities and part of oppressed

classes. Women represent half the population of the country and yet the vast majority living below the poverty line, as illiterate marginalised. Women account for 3/4 of the working population by toiling in the fields, factories, forests, mines, hills, rivers and seas. Yet they receive only 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the total remuneration of labour, not to mention the unpaid and invisible work women do to produce, nurture future generations, sustain families and communities.

In all decision-making institutions, from village panchayat to Legislative Assembly and Parliament, 33% to 50% reservation should be made for dalits, adivasis, most backward classes, minorities and women. In all political parties 33% to 50% reservations should be for women.

The New Economic Policy, which has a lot of adverse impact on women, must be reviewed. Joint patta is to be issued in the name of husband and wife for house sites and land. House sites with patta should be given to single women, women abandoned by their husbands, Dalit women, Adivasi women, Devadasis and to women who lost their homes in communal clashes. Sustainable food guarantee for women should be made through the Public Distribution System.

Women should be guaranteed vocational / technical training, credit facilities and employment. All efforts should be taken for women to get equal rights.

All hazardous contraception and drugs detrimental to women's health should be banned.

Violence against women in the family, work place, during caste, religious and communal conflicts, sexual violence, violence by police should be immediately stopped. For this sustained, strong efforts should be taken. Apart from this, strong legal measures should be undertaken to prevent violence against women.

To prevent indecent, obscene portrayal of women in Films, T.V. serials, Press coverage, etc. the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986 should be strengthened. Advertisements in all media that promote consumerist culture, especially the ones sponsored by multinational companies must be banned.

Women are the most affected due to the lack of basic civic amenities like drinking water, health care, toilet facilities and common property resources. All efforts should be initiated to fully solve these fundamental problems.

All government policies and programmes are discriminatory of women, hence it should include the provisions of CEDAW.

The nexus between the liquor lobby and politics should be broken. Stringent efforts to check increasing alcoholism must be initiated.

### **8.3 CHILDREN – CHILD LABOUR**

Even today majority of the children in Tamilnadu do not have guarantee for food and are denied health Care, education, nutrition, adequate housing and clothing. Though there is a decrease in infant mortality rate and an increase in the number of educated parents, the average expenditure ratio for children is not satisfactory. It is important to compile status Report of children in Tamilnadu by an independent Committee of experts. The Tamilnadu government's 15 point programme and State Plan of Action is mostly not implemented.

Due to inadequate food, health care and educational opportunities the status of the girl child continues to be grim. Girl children are still treated as second class citizens in society. Majority of girl children are forced to work in the house and in unsafe occupations for very low wages. They are forced to marry at a very early age. The incidence of young girls becoming sex workers are increasing.

The Indian Constitution bans child labour. All child labourers do not get minimum wages. As per the Bonded Labour Abolition Act non-payment of minimum wages amounts to bondedness. Thus all child labourers are bonded labourers. Hence employment of children is illegal and violative of the Constitution. The practice of child labour should be eradicated.

Unequal economic development, modern agricultural technology, landlessness, colonial influence, education system, unsatisfactory implementation of poverty alienation programmes, inadequate irrigation facilities, absence of credit facilities and such other causes have, instead of retaining children at schools have pushed thousands of children into the labour market.

Child labour however causes poverty. It provides cheap labour for the industrialists and landlords by replacing thousands of adult workers.

Child Labour is prevalent in large number in southern districts of Tamilnadu. The Tamilnadu government so far has not taken any measures to increase the irrigation facilities and to develop agriculture in these districts. So the Kerala and the Tamilnadu governments should take immediate measures to divert the western ghat waters, so as to increase the agricultural production which will lead to the eradication of child labour in this region.

All Child Labour below 14yrs of age should be prohibited in all forms of employment. The 1986 Child Labour Act should be accordingly amended specifically the proviso that exempts household based labour to employ children. Immediate action to be taken to petition the High Court to vacate its stay given against the amendments brought into the Factories Act prohibiting child labour in cottage industries and household labour. As mentioned in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child the work of children between 15 to 18 years old should be regulated.

The 1994 Tamilnadu Compulsory Education Bill is one of the major strategies for reducing and eradicating child labour. All efforts should be taken to get the President's assent for this bill and its speedy implementation.

Over the next five years child labour should be totally eradicated in agro-based occupations, fishing, estates, match and fireworks, beedi, handloom and powerloom, banian industries, gem cutting, hotels, quarries and brickkilns.

Street Children are children mostly orphaned living in the streets with no protection. To fulfill their basic needs they engage themselves in rag picking, domestic work, begging etc. Street children are denied all the rights guaranteed in the Indian Constitution and UN convention on the Rights of the child. Food and Shelter are the biggest problem for these children. Food and shelter, which is basic for survival of children, should be guaranteed for street children. For the growth and development of these children an integrated shelter with medical, education, health care, play, recreation facilities should be provided. Priority should be given to integrate these children with their families. Stringent Action should be taken against individuals, especially police personnel, who abuse these children physically, sexually and mentally.

## 8.4 DALITS

In Tamilnadu only 13% of Dalits have land. Even these lands are dry lands and are below 2<sup>1/2</sup> acres.

Panchami lands assigned to dalits in TN comprise more than a lakh acre. Government should take the efforts to undertake a study to identify panchami lands in TN and to hand over the lands to the dalits. Government must provide all facilities including finance to cultivate these lands.

Dalits should be treated with self-respect. Untouchability should be totally abolished. Recently the struggles of dalits are on the needs of lands and control over common village resources. During the last decade numerous brutal violations on dalits has taken place in TN especially police firings without sufficient warnings and custodial violence are increasing. The perpetrators of this violence should be penalised.

The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the SC & ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 should be strictly implemented and the offenders should be penalised. The victims of these violence should be compensated adequately under the SC & ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 and the special courts should be established immediately.

The socio-economic political conditions of dalit converts are not different from Hindu dalits. Untouchability and discriminations also prevail among Christian dalits. So all the reservations and other facilities for Hindu dalits should be extended to convert dalits. There should be reservations also in private institutions. The 69% reservation announced by TN government is not implemented properly. It should be implemented fully.

Traditional “Nadu”, a system of governance and control which existed in medieval times as means to oppress dalits exists in Pasumpon District, this should be immediately banned.

## **8.5 FISHING COMMUNITY**

A clear policy opposing the present deep-sea fishing policy of government of India needs to be outlined. Present deep-sea fishing is harmful to fishermen and leads to depletion of our valuable fishing resources. All licenses given by the Ministry of Food Processing for foreign vessels for joint ventures and charter vessels to fish in Indian waters must be cancelled. The policy of government's liberal concessions, exemptions or customs duty, excise duty, sales tax supply of diesel at international prices, 51% foreign equity, subsidies and incentive must be immediately halted.

Instead a new deep-sea fishing policy which centres around encouraging and developing the fisher people to enhance their deep-sea fishing operations at a sustainable level with appropriate technologies should be advocated and implemented.

Inshore is the continental shelf. Trawling should be completely banned in the inshore Area as it destroys the marine eco-system and marine life causing depletion of fish resource and even extinction of some species. Only mid-sea trawling should be allowed.

There has been a growing neglect of inland fisheries in reservoirs, lakes, tanks, ponds etc. in Tamilnadu. This neglect must be reversed as inland fisheries in reservoirs, tanks and ponds can produce common varieties of fish that will be accessible for the common people as nutritious food at reasonable prices. There is the need for an Inland Fisheries (organic) Promotion and Development programme which restores the traditional practice of employing fishermen for reservoir fishing under the control of the State Fisheries Department. The current practice of TNFDC leasing out reservoir fishing rights to private contractors should be immediately stopped.

All swampy areas, brackish water areas, mangrove forests and internationally protected wetlands like Pulicat lake should be preserved under the most stringent joint supervision of the Fisheries department and the fishing community.

The extent of pollution from non-fisheries sources especially industries, shrimp industries, sewage, etc. is reaching very high levels. It is important to constitute a task force of experts and activists involved with the fishing community to assess the impact of the present and future fisheries development potential, on environment and coastal ecology and on the livelihood of the fishing communities.

Proposals to set up new harbours major or medium, for commercial and tourist purposes should be stopped. The erosion caused by these new harbours will destroy the nearby villages and radically alter the traditional occupations and lifestyle of the fishing people. What is needed is de-silting of existing natural fishing harbours and landing centres to make the movement of fish craft more efficient.

Though women constitute 50% of the adult fishing population their interests and needs do not figure in any significant manner in policies, programmes and budgets. Recognise the contribution of women to fisheries development through their extensive marketing and involvement in processing of fish products.

A complete ban on Monoculture Shrimp Industries should be implemented. Public resentment from farmers, agricultural labour and fishing community to shrimp industries is widespread along the coast because of its very adverse impact on environment, livelihood, and human rights. Most important, the government must honour the two Supreme Court interim orders disallowing use of ground water, and prohibiting establishment of any new farms. The Tamilnadu Aquaculture Regulation Act should be comprehensively debated in the light of the demand calling for a complete ban. What is needed is a protective legislation for conserving the traditional resources, fishing practices, water bodies, ecology and common resources for the benefit of the fishing community.

The Coastal Management Plan for Tamilnadu has to be thoroughly redrafted after reconstituting a fresh committee of independent experts, representatives of organisations of the fishing community and representatives of NGOs. The plan must call for an immediate ban on any further industrial activity, tourism, 5 star recreation, shrimp industries etc. on the coast. The plan must clearly identify the most fragile ecosystems and evolve schemes for its conservation. The high-tide line must be clearly delineated with visible markings all along the coast. The Tamilnadu government order reducing the coastal regulation zone to 200 mts from HTL must be revoked and MEF's notification of 500 mts from HTL should be rigorously followed.

Free houses sites should be given with joint ownership rights for all fishing families based on actual usage keeping in mind their special spatial needs. A detailed plan for provision of drinking water, community centres, electricity, roads, sanitation, street lights, afforestation of coastal forests, prevention of erosion, etc. should be

implemented. Common coastal lands along the coast and up to the habitation of the fishing village must be vested solely with the fishing village and their panchayats.

The fishing community should be categorised as scheduled tribes and accorded statutory status at the earliest as per the Mandal Commission Report.

A Fisheries Bank to cater to the specific credit needs of the artisanal fishermen and marketing needs of fishing women should be established. Fishing co-operatives today are functioning very unsatisfactorily. Fishing co-operatives need to be rejuvenated based on an amended status and functions as multipurpose co-operatives including facilities for storage and marketing the catch of the fishing community.

## **8.6 DISABLED**

Issues related to people with disabilities have been relegated to the areas of 'Social Welfare' and 'Charity'. The concerns of the disabled should also be included on the development and human rights agenda. The oppression and barriers they face are basically those of attitudes and environment like housing, transport, employment, education and poverty.

People with disabilities do not want to be regarded as patients who need cure and care but need recognition as any other marginalised minority group.

The People with disabilities (equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation) Act 1995 was passed in Jan 1996. The act must be made a reality.

Right to Education should become a reality. All schools must admit and have resources to cater for inclusive education.

Access and transport facilities must be assured. No public buildings plan to be passed without adequate access facilities for people with disabilities, especially wheel chair users and people using crutches and calipers.

Right to work is a very important right for the disabled. Job and special facilities at the work place has to be provided for people with disabilities. The 3% government reservation for only some categories is highly inadequate.

Awareness programmes in the community on the social model of disability - which means adapting the environment to the needs of people with disabilities

Right to Equal participation in all Community Development programmes is a must. People with disabilities are generally marginalised and isolated. Their demand and need to be integrated. Disability is not an individual problem but a community concern.

## **8.7 MINORITIES**

The growing communalism in India is now showing its face in Tamilnadu also. The communal organisations are organising the majority by portraying and branding the minorities as enemies, separatists and anti-nationalists alienating the minorities from the majority. The arbitrary use of detention laws against Muslims in Tamilnadu is strongly condemned.

Organisations, films, Newspapers and other mass media that show minorities especially Muslims as anti-social and anti-national should be prosecuted.

Minorities are economically backward. In government and Banks jobs they represent only 2 to 3 percent. In the private sector the participation of the minorities especially Muslims is negligible since they are discriminated just for the reason of being a Muslim. In rural areas, out of 12 Muslim students, 10 drop out before reaching the High school level. Similarly their number in medical and engineering field is also very low. Constitutional provision for the protection and promotion of the rights of the minorities should be strictly implemented. The Constitutional rights given to minority institutions should be protected and guaranteed. Government of India should immediately amend the Constitution to provide reservation for all Christian dalits. All Muslims indiscriminately detained under TADA should be immediately released and tried under the normal criminal law if necessary. We are concerned about the communalisation of the government and police. Action should be taken against personnel who participate in communal organisations.

The Minorities Commission should be made an independent body with representatives of various experts among the minorities. It should be strengthened and empowered to advice and monitor various special programmes for the development of all disadvantaged minorities. It should also be empowered to monitor all forms of discrimination and abuse against minorities.

## **8.8 URBAN HUTMENT DWELLERS**

Housing is a basic human right. Human right should be made fundamental. Tamilnadu government should pass a resolution towards making housing rights as fundamental. Tamilnadu government should enact a Housing rights legislation to guarantee adequate housing and proper resettlement policy.

Government should hold a fresh survey of all hutment areas in urban Tamilnadu and recognise the hutment areas. The hutments in government lands should be regularised and land ownership joint patta should be given to the residents. Stop all evictions in the name of development plans like MRTS, clean waterways, etc. Dwellers to be displaced and resettled only if the government proves that a place is needed for public purpose. There should be detailed re-settlement policy based on Supreme Court judgements regarding right for adequate housing, fair re-settlement.

All hutment areas should be provided with basic civic amenities such as drinking water, street lights, toilets, roads, public services, etc.

Traditional, modern, low cost building materials must be provided by PDS with subsidy. The government should acquire surplus lands under Urban Land Ceiling Act and redistribute these lands to hutment dwellers in their corresponding corporation division or municipal limits. Strictly enforce ULCRA and the necessary amendments to delete exemption clauses and loopholes. All the surplus land acquired under ULCRA must be used only for hutment dwellers.

Ownership of the multi-storied tenements must be conferred on the occupants at the value at the time of constructions only and not present day market value. An independent monitoring committee should be setup to assess the quality of construction of tenements.

Elections must be held immediately to all corporations and municipalities and the powers enshrined in the 74th amendment should be transferred to the elected bodies. The development of hutment dwellers should be left with the elected bodies and not with Slum Clearance Board.

Women hutment dwellers should be granted interest free loans for self-employment and joint pattas for the house sites. In the name of slum clearance and development

Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Board evicts the hutment dwellers who are living traditionally in their residence. Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Board is not protecting the interest of slum dwellers. The need must be reviewed so as make amendments in Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Act.

Keeping in mind the interests of hutment dwellers the master plan of Town and Country Planning Act and Development Control Rules should widely be debated.

## **8.9 CONSUMERS**

40% of our people live below the poverty line and do not have access to food. Starvation deaths continue in various parts of the country in spite of large surplus reserves of food grains. Food security is a Fundamental Right guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

Food security, the Fundamental and Basic Rights of the people means not only a right against hunger, but a right to access to food and also to safe drinking water, environmental sanitation, basic health care and primary education.

PDS should not only be a permanent part of the food security system, it needs to be strengthened and the items made more relevant to cover the basic needs of the people living below the poverty line.

The prices of commodities supplied through the PDS should be pegged at least for a period of 5 years and in the event of the downward trend in the prices should be reflected in the issue prices.

An efficient, low-cost, timely and adequate supply of commodities to the consumer in the rural, tribal, remote, backward and urban areas of our country needs to be ensured. Improvement in the quality of food grains is needed.

Eternal vigilance of the PDS by strict enforcement of the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act and other laws and by nominating members of the voluntary organisations of proven track record to the PDS vigilance committees.

Export of essential agricultural commodities of mass consumption at the expense of the poor and disadvantaged in the country should not be permitted.

The recommendations of the working group constituted by the Central Consumer Protection Committee under the chairmanship of the Hon'ble Food Minister of the Government of West Bengal should be accepted. The recommendations had suggested further amendments to the Consumer Protection Act of 1996 so as to make provisions for inclusion of all free health and medical services rendered by the Government as "Service" under the Consumer protection Act; the prohibition for lawyers to appear before Forum in complaints where the claims were valued at Rs.5,000/- and less and in other complaints that lawyers would be permitted to appear only if the complainant had engaged a lawyer; the establishment of Central and State Public Utilities Commission etc. These amendments will go a long way in strengthening gross-root democracy.

Need to bring into effect a National Charter on Patients Rights and Responsibilities, a National Drug Policy emphasising the purchase of drugs in all government health establishments and programmes by generic name and not brand name and the inclusion of an essential drugs list based on the WHO list.

A Central/State legislation to provide for banning of private practice among doctors in Government service with adequate compensation to the doctors, compulsory licensing of all hospitals, nursing homes and medical diagnostic centres so as to live up to the standards set by the Bureau of Indian Standards for such services.

Need to ensure that adequate representation of competent consumer activists with expertise in made mandatory in all committees wherein representatives of trade commerce and professionals find a place in respect of any departments of Ministry. It is only when consumer interests are represented in different Forums that real protection to consumers and their long-term interests could be ensured.

## **8.10 ADIVASIS**

The majority of the tribal population in Tamilnadu live on hilly regions, viz., Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats and the discontinuous hill tracts adjoining the Tamilnadu plains and the areas adjoining the hills. Forest plays a vital role in the economy of all the forest dwelling communities. Traditionally tribals owned the land, water and forests on a community basis. With emergence of private ownership of land, forests restrictions and intrusions of non tribal population, began a gradual process of alienation of the tribals, from their land and forests. The unilateral impositions of forestry laws and

rules formation of statutory panchayats and infringements by law courts have diluted the authority and control of the tribals.

All Adivasi hamlets in Tamilnadu with 50% or more Adivasis should be declared as 5th Schedule Areas of Article 244. These scheduled areas should be suitably reorganised into appropriate administrative units of self-governance.

The T.N Panchayat Raj Act should not be applied in these scheduled areas. Instead the recommendations of the Bhuria Committee Report should be implemented.

Parliament should enact a statute legislate an act for 5<sup>th</sup> schedule areas on the basis of and incorporative of all the recommendations of the Bhuria Committee Report which had recommended the guidelines for self-governance in 5<sup>th</sup> Schedule Areas.

Legislation should be enacted in Tamilnadu to restore alienated Adivasi lands since 1960 (as in the state of Kerala) to the Adivasis. These lands should be under the control of adivasis only.

All land transfer from ST to non-ST should be immediately banned

Statutes for restoration of alienated land and restriction of land transfer should be inserted in the 9th schedule to prevent the acts being questioned in any court of law.

Re-establishment of the Adivasis command over their territory - land, Forest and water. The state should take only such actions so as to fulfill this aim of the adivasis.

Establishment of a separate court for Adivasis for speedy trial of all cases relating to Adivasis.

All development activities in Adivasis areas that are not decided/approved by Adivasis local committees should not be allowed to be implemented.

## **8.11 REPATRIATES AND REFUGEES**

According to Indo-Srilanka agreement 5 lakh Srilankan repatriates have been integrated and settled in India. However many of them have not been rehabilitated properly. These families must be identified by an in-depth survey and rehabilitation immediately provided to enable them to live with dignity and security.

The educational and employment reservation facilities extended to Repatriates and their children have been completely stopped. It will take a long time for these people to get settle and live in security and dignity. The concessions given in Education and in employment must extend at least for a period of 10 years.

All repatriates families should be provided with adequate land for cultivation and housing. Forced eviction of repatriates should be immediately stopped. About 60% of the Repatriates are yet not provided housing facilities. Initiative must be taken urgently to provide housing for all repatriates. Stop harassment and threats by police and forest officials.

The human rights of Srilankan refugees should be respected and they should be treated on par with the other refugees from other regions like Bangladesh, Burma, Bhutan, Vietnam etc according to accepted International human rights standards. All facilities like adequate food, shelter, and health care must be provided. Treating refugees as anti-social elements or militants violates their rights and must be stopped.

## *People's Manifesto - the Process*

The germinating ideas for this People's manifesto was sown at the Peoples Summit on Social Development in Tamilnadu held in March '95 as a Parallel Summit to the World Summit on Social Development. Numerous thematic presentations outlined the political issues & socio-economic concerns facing the state. The Tamilnadu Peoples Forum for Social Development was born out of this effort. The announcement of elections to Panchayats crystalised some of this thinking into two important declarations viz. Tamilnadu NGO Declaration on Panchayati Raj and Decentralised Democracy and a Peoples Charter for Panchayati Election in Tamilnadu adopted at the State-level Convention on Panchayat Raj held in November '95.

General elections were due and it was strongly felt by many social action groups and activists that there is the need to draft an alternative programme for sustainable development, democratic and decentralised polity and the right to livelihood. The Election manifestos of all major political Parties have been thoroughly studied. This manifesto is being released as a representation of the collective voices from the grassroots.

It is a Social Charter that will be placed by peoples organisations before candidates and political parties demanding their acceptance. Simultaneously, which ever party or combination of parties that comes to power will need to prepare and present a new Budget for 1996-1997. The TNPFS has established a Budgetary Analysis and Policy Priority cell which will be closely monitoring the Government of Tamilnadu Budget. The peoples Manifesto will be the peoples programme - a framework to evaluate the performance of which ever government that comes to power in Tamilnadu.

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**TAMILNADU PEOPLES FORUM FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

5/1, Sathyapuri Street, West Mambalam, Chennai - 600 033.

☎ : 0091-44 4896845 Fax : 0091-44 4612683 E-Mail manu50@md4.vsnl.net.in